



From this place and of this place: Climate change, sense of place, and health in Nunatsiavut, Canada

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Abstract:

As climate change impacts are felt around the globe, people are increasingly exposed to changes in weather patterns, wildlife and vegetation, and water and food quality, access and availability in their local regions. These changes can impact human health and well-being in a variety of ways: increased risk of foodborne and waterborne diseases; increased frequency and distribution of vector-borne disease; increased mortality and injury due to extreme weather events and heat waves; increased respiratory and cardiovascular disease due to changes in air quality and increased allergens in the air; and increased susceptibility to mental and emotional health challenges. While climate change is a global phenomenon, the impacts are experienced most acutely in place; as such, a sense of place, place-attachment, and place-based identities are important indicators for climate-related health and adaptation. Representing one of the first qualitative case studies to examine the connections among climate change, a changing sense of place, and health in an Inuit context, this research draws data from a multi-year community-driven case study situated in the Inuit community of Rigolet, Nunatsiavut, Canada. Data informing this paper were drawn from the narrative analysis of 72 in-depth interviews conducted from November 2009 to October 2010, as well as from the descriptive analysis of 112 questionnaires from a survey in October 2010 (95% response rate). The findings illustrated that climate change is negatively affecting feelings of place attachment by disrupting hunting, fishing, foraging, trapping, and traveling, and changing local landscapes-changes which subsequently impact physical, mental, and emotional health and well-being. These results also highlight the need to develop context-specific climate-health planning and adaptation programs, and call for an understanding of place-attachment as a vital indicator of health and well-being and for climate change to be framed as an important determinant of health.

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Resource Description

Exposure :

weather or climate related pathway by which climate change affects health

Ecosystem Changes, Human Conflict/Displacement

Geographic Feature:

resource focuses on specific type of geography

Climate Change and Human Health Literature Portal

Arctic

Geographic Location:

resource focuses on specific location

Non-United States

Non-United States: Non-U.S. North America

Health Impact:

specification of health effect or disease related to climate change exposure

Mental Health/Stress, Other Health Impact

Other Health Impact: Solastalgia; wellbeing; place-based health

Mitigation/Adaptation:

mitigation or adaptation strategy is a focus of resource

Adaptation

Population of Concern: A focus of content

Population of Concern:

populations at particular risk or vulnerability to climate change impacts

Racial/Ethnic Subgroup, Workers

Other Racial/Ethnic Subgroup: Inuit

Resource Type:

format or standard characteristic of resource

Research Article

Resilience:

capacity of an individual, community, or institution to dynamically and effectively respond or adapt to shifting climate impact circumstances while continuing to function

A focus of content

Timescale:

time period studied

Time Scale Unspecified

Vulnerability/Impact Assessment:

resource focus on process of identifying, quantifying, and prioritizing vulnerabilities in a system

A focus of content